



Potters Guild of British Columbia

1359 Cartwright St., Granville Island
Vancouver, B.C. V6H 3R7
(604) 683-9623

NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 1989

ISSN 6319 812X

LAURA WEE LAY LAQ

"Pottery predates recorded history. Ceramic arts not only provide a link to the past, but continue to develop according to contemporary stylistic and technological innovations. Recognizing the strength and simplicity of traditional methods, Laura Wee Lay Laq has incorporated these into her own ceramic vessels, combining them with a unique sense of form to create works of art that are startlingly new, yet strangely familiar visions of nature unfolding."

The above paragraph is the first in an article written by the Vancouver potter, Deborah Tibbel, as introductory to the August show, curated by her, of Laura Wee Lay Laq's work at the UBC Fine Arts Gallery. We happily reprint the whole of this monograph with Deborah's permission, and congratulate Laura on a very impressive collection of work. The Vancouver Sun (Aug. 22nd) gave a glowing review, "Pottery patterns surprise".

"Since graduating with honours from the Vancouver School of Art in 1977, Wee Lay Laq has exhibited and taught in Canada and the United States. Involvement with the Emily Carr College of Art and Design Outreach Program has taken her to remote areas of British Columbia, giving her the opportunity to occasionally remove herself from the isolation of her studio, and to become directly involved with arts communities throughout the province. Wee Lay Laq's work has been exhibited in Honolulu, Hawaii, where she lived for several years, and is currently shown in Santa Fe, New Mexico, a centre for traditional pottery making.

Each piece is formed by hand, without the use of a potter's wheel. The process involves slow and careful work, and no more than two or three pieces are worked on simultaneously. Beginning with a small slab of clay, the form develops as coils are individually wedged, rolled and added to one another. When each coil has been securely attached, the form is smoothed and modelled into the desired shape by pinching or paddling. The sounds of wedging, rolling, and paddling become a rhythmic, meditative accompaniment to the growth of the piece. This process requires

strength, concentration, and skill, particularly with larger pieces, which must be strong enough to support themselves while the clay is still in a plastic shape. When the form has reached its desired shape, and has been suitably refined, it is burnished with a smooth stone until the surface shines with reflected light and is soft to the touch. As much as she appreciates and looks forward to the end product, Wee Lay Laq feels that the intimate times she spends creating, and particularly burnishing, is the most important part of the process. Many hours are spent in burnishing, and the hollow tapping sound of the stone passing over the drying clay is pleasurable soothing.

Wee Lay Laq uses an electric kiln to "bisque" her pots. This initial firing allows the clay to reach a state in which it is strong enough to withstand the unpredictable process of the final sawdust firing without losing the sheen of burnishing. The high fire clay that Wee Lay Laq uses does not vitrify even in this final firing, but remains porous, taking on the delightfully unpredictable markings that occur as the sawdust burns down.

(Continued on page 4)



The Potters Guild of B.C. NEWSLETTER

is published 10 times a year. Submissions are welcome, and should be in the Guild office by the last Friday of the month. Material may be edited for publication.

Managing Editor: Jan Kidnie.

Editorial Committee: Bob Kingsmill, Laurel McGregor, Hiro Urakami, Nathan Rafla, Anne Fleetham.

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Advertising rates: \$75.00 full page; \$40.00 half page; \$25.00 quarter page; business card \$15.00; classified \$5.00 for 3 lines; additional lines \$2.00 each. All ads must be prepaid.

The Potters Guild of B.C. meets the fourth Wednesday of every month. Membership in the Guild is \$20.00-individuals, \$30.00-groups, January to January. See application form elsewhere in this issue.

Board of Directors: Sam Kwan, Pres., Tam Irving, Vice-Pres.; Nathan Rafla, Secretary; Kathryn Youngs, Treas.; Theota Dancer, Bob Kingsmill, June MacDonald, D'Arcy Margesson, Cherie Markiewicz, Elsa Schamis, Terry Ryals & Ron Tribe.

GUILD NEWS

During this past summer, meetings were held between Potters' Guild directors and the tenants who work with clay in the large space out behind the Guild's Gallery on Granville Island.

The directors, guided by interested members, have been attempting to come to an agreement with the tenants so that we might use some of the common space for monthly or bi-monthly meetings. This is desirable because it would permit members to use the library and to visit the Gallery on the same evening as our meetings.

The tenants, over the years, have had some negative experiences with Guild members and executive. Some of these have arisen from the misconception that the space belongs to the Guild. This isn't so. There are five separate work spaces and one of these is taken by the Guild. It is inappropriate for anyone to wander out back unless invited or by arrangement—just as with most studios.

Access to the back through a proliferation of keys, as various people took up and rotated use of the work-

space, has apparently resulted in some theft and breakage. Because of this, the tenants could not, initially, see any benefit in accommodating the Guild's request.

There has not previously been a good mechanism for communication between the tenants and the Guild. Because of this there has not been a fast recognition and resolution of problems; instead, there's been a compounding sense of distrust. To diminish this, each group will appoint a liaison person to develop and maintain a dialogue, with the expressed desire of working on problems quickly.

CMHC rents/leases to all of us and has been of service in getting the Guild and the tenants together. They will investigate expanding the space above the Gallery so that we may have a permanent meeting space.

In the meantime, the tenants have allowed that we can make use of part of their common space for our meetings. We will rope off some of it, keep members out of their work areas, allow no calls on their telephone and altogether remain as sensitive as we would in anyone's studio.

At the June 8th meeting of the Board of Directors of the Guild, discussion about changes to Gallery show policy and procedure took place. As a result, the following changes were approved.

Effective September, the format for featuring new work will change from one of exhibition, to that of features of in-shop artists. This means that there will be no mid-week evening openings, except on special occasions, and a move towards a Saturday afternoon meet-the-artist reception. It is hoped, thereby to enable the artist to have more interaction with the public and with Guild members as well.

This change also allows for the introduction of new formats such as shows of work from regional Guilds throughout the province, to better fulfill our mandate to the membership.

These changes are on a one-year trial basis, and will, at the end of that time, be assessed for their effectiveness. The Board views this change as an ongoing process of evolving more effective use of Gallery shop space.

If you have any questions about the change of policy, please contact the Gallery Manager, Coralie Triance.

D'Arcy Margesson



Gallery of B.C. Ceramics
1359 Cartwright St. Granville Island
Vancouver BC, Canada
(604) 669-5645 V6H 3R7

GALLERY REPORT

The summer has proven to be another record-breaking one in sales, and I thank all of you who have worked so diligently to keep us well stocked. I would also like to express my thanks to Margaret McClelland for her able assistance and keen involvement in the Gallery.

Our first show of the fall, "Introducing Linda Bain-Woods", opens on September 1st as part of Craftweek. Linda will be present on Saturday, September 2nd to meet visitors to the Gallery. She moved last year with her family from Ontario to the White Rock area, and we welcome her and her work. Similarly, we welcome other new Gallery artists, Sylvia Ohrn, Diane Searle, Takako Suzuki, Doris Ludwig, Wayne Sayer, Suzy Birstein, Carol Lyons, and Normand Des Rosiers.

Connie Glover will be featured in the Gallery October 2nd-29th, with a "Meet the Artist" October 14th, from 1 to 4 pm.

Sheila Lindfield's sculptural work will be featured from the end of October to November 27th.

As you may know, Design Vancouver (a non-profit organization) is once again sponsoring "Design Week" in February 1990 to promote public awareness of design in all the arts. We participated last year with a mug show. I have made a proposal to the Board's Gallery Committee that the Guild become more deeply involved by having a juried show with a thematic focus. Publicity, always good for the Gallery and for the potters, will be handled by Design Vancouver at no cost to the Guild. The theme of "dinner settings" is being considered. Keep reading your Newsletter for further information!

Coralie Triance

COMING IN THE OCTOBER ISSUE

Gordon Hutchens responds to the question of environmental damage in salt-glazing raised in the June issue by Barbara Hirano.

EXHIBITIONS AND SALES

Craftweek, September 1 - 10, throughout Vancouver, celebrates the artistry of B.C.'s outstanding craftspeople. John Springer and Steve Webster are featured at the Diane Farris Gallery. Sharon Reay's "Storybooks" at Dragonspace, and Linda Bain-Woods at the Gallery of B.C. Ceramics. There will be numerous demonstrations by various crafts artists, including one by Jean-Marie Claret, potter, at the Cartwright Gallery from 11 am to 3 pm on Friday September 8.

Sotheby's, 34 New Bond St., London, announces the sale of Ceramics and Glass by 20th Century Artists and Studio Potters, October 26th, 1989. Included is work by Picasso, Hans Coper, Lucie Rie, and Bernard Leach.

The Burnaby Art Gallery, 6344 Deer Lake Avenue, is presently holding an exhibition of "Landscape Sculptures" by Douglas Senft. The show runs until September 17.

LIBRARY

The Library is in receipt of several new publications, including the Catalogue of the National Biennale of Ceramics. The Library, however, is in need of a Librarian! Please get in touch with the Guild, if you're interested. A great deal of available time is not necessary; specifically, someone is needed who has an interest in recent publishing in the field, someone who'll find some new material for the library, and keep the filing system up-dated.

WEE LAY LAQ (Continued from page 1)

The final firing takes place in a brick enclosure. A mixture of coarse and fine sawdust packed uniformly in and around each piece ensures an even temperature and regulates the speed of combustion. Inside the brick enclosure, the pots are stacked securely, the largest on the bottom level, with smaller sizes balanced on top of them. Because no glaze is applied, the pieces may be stacked one on top of the other.

When the entire chamber has been filled with sawdust, several sheets of newsprint are placed over the top, with a light dusting of sawdust between each one. A sheet of corrugated metal is then placed over the entire kiln, elevated slightly to allow for combustion. Wee Lay Laq then sets fire to long cones of newsprint, and places them strategically between the lid and the last layer of sawdust. Once she is convinced the material is burning evenly, the kiln is left for two or three days, until the sawdust has burned down and the pieces cool.

While these techniques are based on Wee Lay Laq's interest in the pottery of indigenous peoples of the world, the forms express her love of botanical imagery. Some pieces reflect vessels designed as functional containers, while others call up more organic, naturally occurring shapes found in nature - seed pods, petals in various stages of bloom, or the rugged silhouettes of mountainous landscapes.



The simplest pieces are ollas, reminiscent of pottery long made in the Southwestern United States and Mexico. The austere symmetry of these tightly contained vessels exudes tradition and antiquity. In contrast, *Pods* curve tautly inward, split slightly, as if they are about to spring open, casting seeds. *Petal* forms are captured as they unfold midway between bud and bloom. There is a quiet tension in these forms caught as they are in transition. *Mountain* ollas are an extension of the olla, juxtaposing their pure symmetry with the more unpredictable formations of nature. These are not split, but carved as if to echo the effects of wind on earth. Contained within the perfectly balanced shape of an olla, a mountain range, eroded with the irregularities of wind and time, combines tradition and nature. Olla, pod, petal, and mountain olla. Together these represent Wee Lay Laq's stylistic development, her striving for elegance, harmony, and balance, building a vocabulary of innovative forms from basic, elemental shapes.

Nature unfolding. There is a direct parallel between Wee Lay Laq's imagery and her own involvement in the process of creating. Using her mind, her hands, and clay, her intention is to capture the essence of transition, motion unfolding. Wee Lay Laq's images are an expression of that which she finds beautiful in the world. They are balanced, smooth, and sensuous, works of art designed to be visual and tactile reminders of nature. The material is natural, the method of firing uses organic substances, and the forms are in harmony with their surroundings. Although they may be used for utilitarian purposes, their main function is provide pleasure, to uplift, to enrich our environment. Wee Lay Laq is searching for a universal language of beauty, and with her work she strives to appeal to aesthetics shared throughout the world. "

Deborah Tibbel
June, 1989

CLASSES & WORKSHOPS

Emily Carr College of Art and Design continues its Outreach Program, in addition to its in-house credit or non-credit courses. For information on either, contact the College at 1399 Johnston St., Granville Island, Vancouver, V6H 3R9, or call collect (604) 687-2345, Monday thru Friday, 8:30-5:00 pm.

Capilano College, 2055 Purcell Way, North Vancouver, V7J 3H5, may possibly have space left in some of its ceramic programmes. Contact Joyce Fensher at 984-4911. Courses offered include Donna MacLaren's First and Second Year functional pottery, all day Thursdays and Tuesdays respectively, with Jim Thornsbury giving Monday courses, a daytime sculptural, and an evening ceramic art session.

Kwantlen College, Newton Campus, in Surrey, offers courses: phone 588-4411.

Vancouver Community College, Langara Campus, at 49th and Cambie in Vancouver, offers a ceramic program with Don Hutchinson. Call 324-5505 for further information. Classes are full!

Place des Arts, 1120 Brunette Avenue, Coquitlam, V3K 1G2, (604) 526-2891, is taking registration by mail or in person, Sept. 6 through 16th. Classes begin the week of September 18th, and include a ten-week Functional Pottery course with Gillian McMillan, Tuesday or Thursday, 7:30-9:30 pm, or Monday, 10:00-12 noon. \$60 course fee; \$18 lab fee includes glazes and firing. Students are encouraged to work in the studio during non-teaching hours. June MacDonald offers instruction on Starting your own Pottery Studio with an electric kiln, Wednesday, 12:30-2:30 pm, or 7:30-9:30 pm. The four sessions cost \$24; lab fee is \$6. A minimum of 4 students.

At the **Burnaby Arts Centre**, 6450 Deer Lake Avenue, Burnaby, (604) 291-6864, Elaine Brewer-White is giving a sculptural course, and Nathan Rafla, Jane Williams and Sam Kwan offer functional courses throughout the week. Jack Olive presents a glaze workshop, Sunday, October 29th and November 5th, 1:30-4:30 pm. Fee is \$25 for the two-day workshop. Although Laura Wee Lay Laq's September workshop is full, there is a possibility of a November session with her. Call the centre for full details of all programmes.

The British studio potter, **Colin Pearson**, will conduct a six-day workshop at Pottery Northwest, 226 First Ave. North, Seattle, WA 98109. (206) 285-4421 September 11 through 16. A free slide/lecture will be presented by him on Tuesday evening, September 12, 8 pm at the same address. Contact Pottery Northwest for space availability.

Aberthau, West Point Grey Community Centre, offers classes with Lynn Evans and Jack McKitterick. Suzy Birstein and Susan Hoppenfeld give classes for children. Call the centre at 224-1910.

The West End Community Centre offers beginners and intermediate classes; contact 689-0571.

CALLS FOR ENTRY/ OPPORTUNITIES

The **Community Arts Council** of Vancouver invites participants to its fourth annual juried **Christmas Craft Sale**, to be held at the CAC Gallery during December 1989. Phone the office at 683-4358, or write the CAC, 837 Davie St., Vancouver, V6Z 1B7, for further information.

The **Kent-Harrison Arts Council** invites applicants to the 13th Annual **Christmas Tree Craft Fair** in Agassiz, on Saturday December 2nd. Lynda Vaun Scobie, Box 383, Harrison Hot Springs, B.C., V0M 1K0 will send forms and information, with the receipt of a self-addressed stamped envelope.

The **Richmond Art Gallery** is calling for submissions for jurying for 1990 exhibitions. Deadline is Sunday, September 24th, 4:00 pm. For application forms and further information write or phone Richmond Art Gallery, 7671 Minoru Gate, Richmond, B.C., V6Y 1R8, (604) 276-4012.

The **Community Arts Council of White Rock and District** is now accepting applications for the 14th Annual "Arts by the Sea" **Christmas Craft Fair**, to be held November 10th and 11th in White Rock. For further information and applications, contact the Station Art Centre at Box 85, White Rock, B.C., V4B 4Z7, or phone 536-2432. Some forms available at Guild office.

Harrison Festival Society's "Castles n' Crafts Craftmarket" will be held September 9 & 10. For possible space, telephone 796-3664.

Cameo's Christmas Craft Sale will be held in the Edmonton Convention Centre, December 2nd to December 10th. For further information, write Ruthe Spector, and #311, 10545 Saskatchewan Dr., Edmonton, Alberta, T6E 6C6, or phone (403) 439-1130.

The **Squamish Arts Council** are accepting registration from artists interested in selling at their market at the Brackendale Art Gallery, Saturday and Sunday, November 25 & 26. \$35 for two days per table. Inquire Maureen Brown, Box 119, Garibaldi Highlands, B.C., V0N 1T0. or call 898-3188.

Vancouver Craft Market at the VanDusen Botanical Gardens takes place Sunday, October 22nd, and in November and December. Contact Simone Avram at 275-2724.

Keith Snyder, an instructor of Chado (the Way of Tea) announces the opening of the new Buddhist temple, Tozenji, in Coquitlam at 209 Jackson Street. The temple will also function as a cultural centre focusing on Japanese traditional arts. Mr. Snyder would like to promote a strong relationship between B.C. potters and tea people, and has been impressed with the B.C. ceramics he has seen. He can be reached at 939-7749, if you're interested in learning more.

SUMMER RAMBLES

Last November, attending my father's funeral in Ontario, I promised myself an extended visit to Ontario this summer. It turned out not only to be that, but also much more. An almost-cross-continent discovery tour with my two fourteen-year-old boys would have to be more! I don't think I ever imagined how much more!

In order to survive the daily driving grind, we developed techniques for survival along the way. An army surplus store here, a skateboard ramp there, and to my surprise, the willingness of David and Peter to indulge with me in hunting out antique shops and museums that might give up hidden ceramic or glass treasures (I have a curious passion for 1 cup ceramic teapots of any description).

Medicine Hat was high on my list of must-sees, although the ambient air temperature meant there was no consideration of staying very long! A working museum on the former Medalta factory site has been planned for some time. Understandably, given the scale of reconstruction necessary, there have been difficulties in getting underway. I eventually found the Medicine Hat museum and was given a tour of the storage area in which their Medalta et al. collection is housed. That brief time has given a whole new purpose to my Vancouver scavenging for bits and pieces. If any of you have identifiable bits of Medalta, Little Chief, or other goodies, and want to get rid of them, Donny White, Curator of Human History, Medicine Hat Museum and Art Gallery, 1302 Bomford Cresc. SW., Medicine Hat, Alberta, T1A 5E6, would be very pleased to hear from you. Well worth a visit, along with the Glenbow Museum's collection in Calgary. The challenge to people like Donny to record something of a community's history is immense.

Eventually made it to Quebec City, with the boys and my husband, Jim, as well. Tourism is the No. 1 industry there in the summer and it's very easy to begin to feel as if reality is a mob of tourists. After two hours, I become distressed, and it was therefore with great relief that I discovered Hélène Labreque, wife of Gabriel, selling her husband's work in one of the open air markets. It was like bumping into an old friend, and happily realizing you still have a lot to talk about. Gabriel's work is found throughout the east, and in several western locations; Hélène says he's too busy working to think of travelling and giving workshops, but he and Ron Tribe would have fun comparing notes, I'm sure. Ron's work I see as more sophisticated, but Gabriel uses airbrushed turquoise, grey and blue colour to striking effect on lightly-textured thrown and slab forms.

More to follow next month, on Hull's new Museum of Civilization, and on notes from Montreal, Toronto, and Minneapolis!!

Jan Kidnie

BIZEN: A VISIT BY YU FUJIWARA

Earlier this year the Guild and the Emily Carr College of Art was approached by Keith Fedoruk of the Japanese Consulate with a tempting opportunity. 1989 is the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the Japanese Consulate in Canada and to celebrate its centennial, the Consulate was arranging a series of special events. Their proposal to the Guild was to bring a potter to Vancouver for a workshop in June along with an exhibition of Japanese folk art and would the Guild be interested in organizing a workshop?

We enthusiastically agreed, although no one knew who the potter would be. Several weeks later we along with the Consulate, were still waiting to hear from Japan. Finally word arrived that Yu Fujiwara from Bizen would be the potter coming. Several meetings were held and the details would be worked out by Tam Irving, Jan Kidnie and myself.

We were also invited to a dinner for Mr. Fujiwara hosted by the Consulate. It was at the restaurant that the realization of my ignorance of Japanese protocol began to overwhelm me, especially when Consul General Yoshida arrived. I realized they weren't fooling around, and Tam and Takako hadn't arrived yet. Mr. Fujiwara and his son Kazue arrived, and after a lot of bowing and introductions (in Japanese), we were ushered into a private room. I had been told that Mr. Fujiwara and his son didn't speak English (which compounded my anxiety), but my sense of responsibility to the Guild kept me from bolting from the room. After a few minutes of crushing silence, we waited for the guest of honour to be seated. After some chit-chat (in Japanese), Mr. Fujiwara turned to me and asked in English how many potters there were in Vancouver. My immediate reply was "I didn't know you spoke English." What a relief. He replied that he has been to Canada and the U.S. several times and that both he and his son had studied English literature in university. By this time Tam and Takako arrived and the sensation in my neck and shoulders was returning. As the evening progressed I found Mr. Fujiwara to be quite charming and entertaining, and I looked forward to his workshop.

The morning of the workshop, I was surprised to see the large number of people in attendance in the ceramic studio at the College. We had arranged a rough timetable for the two days to be followed by a dinner at Jean Fahrni's. I had arranged to have a friend, David Lloyd, who has potted in Japan, to translate. The workshop itself was not so much a how-to type of workshop, as Mr. Fujiwara preferred to explain the unique aspects of Bizen pottery and the philosophy behind his approach to their work. He compared Bizen ware to other traditional ware in Japan and reflected on its position in contemporary society.

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FUJIWARA (Continued from previous page)

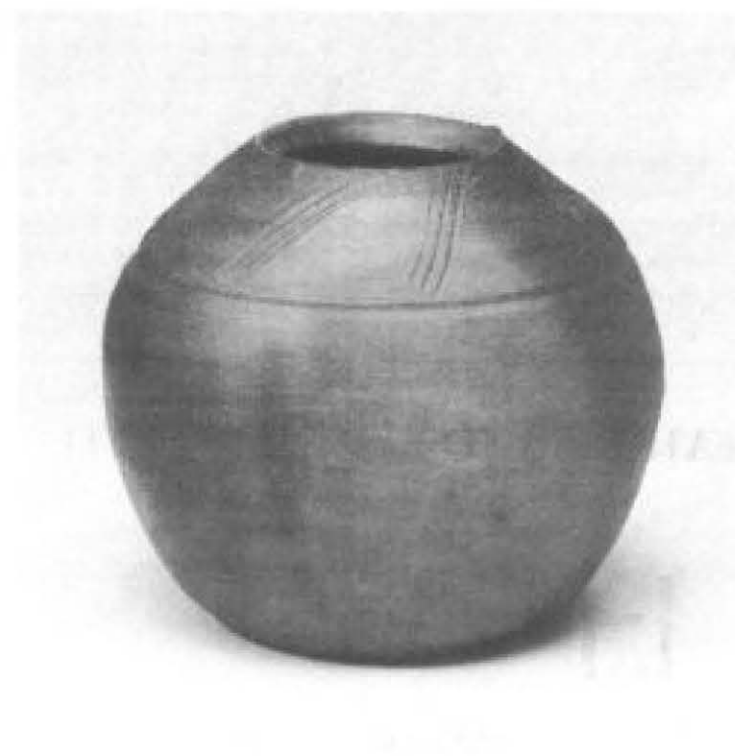
I think it is difficult for many of us in the West to realize the reverence and importance of potters in Japan. In his comparisons of cultural attitudes towards pots I was reminded that the established tradition of pottery and its place in Japanese society spans thousands of years. Along with a video of the Bizen process which to many seemed very labour-intensive, Mr. Fujiwara explained the extraordinary process of the clay preparation, a mixture of several types of clay from various depths beneath the fields around Bizen. All the clay is hand processed (dried, pounded, slaked, stiffened) and cleaned by slicing clay blocks and picking out the stones. Some apprentices will spend three years (of their ten year apprenticeship) just preparing clay. When asked why so much effort was spent preparing the clay, Mr. Fujiwara replied that the clay won't be taken for granted, and it is this indigenous clay that makes Bizen ware unique (some of his clay will cost about \$30 a pound). In spite of the exacting methods of processing, the clay will often crack during drying or firing or will collapse on the wheel depending on the form. It was interesting to see in the video large jars drying with strips of cloth or paper wrapped around the belly of the form to keep the pot from collapsing. I have seen photographs of the same technique in traditional Southeast Asian and Middle Eastern potteries and became aware of how universal the clay forming process is and how the many similarities in working within the limitations of the materials evolve. In Bizen all the pots are unglazed and single-fired in wood-fuelled kilns over a period of days and depending upon placement in the kiln, a variety of effects develop from the wood ash falling on the pots. Mr. Fujiwara maintains a wood lot of red pine for the firing of his kiln.

Of the several insights Mr. Fujiwara often repeated was that to grow as a creative artist a person has to always have a hunger for good and honest work, not just for pots but for food, or painting, or nature, and through perseverance, a person's work will lead to an enlightened fulfillment in spite of hardships. A per-

son's belief in their abilities and potential was necessary for creative growth. I am sure we were very fortunate in having Mr. Fujiwara here because he has a very hectic schedule in Japan and doesn't manage to give very many workshops.

I would like to thank Keith Fedoruk and Consul Honda of the Japanese Consulate for this opportunity, Jan for the attention to the organizational details, Tam for coordinating with the College, Luis Riera and the Burnaby Art Centre for the clay, David Lloyd for the great job translating, Jean Fahrni for hosting the dinner, Hiro and all those who helped with the dinner, the many other volunteers, and the people who attended the workshop.

Sam Kwan



- ☐ Membership Application
- ☐ Membership Renewal
- ☐ Change of Address

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Len, Dave, Vern & Rick

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